

February 15, 2023



Hello and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jennifer Gunderman and I am Director of the Maine Area Health Education Center, otherwise known as the acronym Maine AHEC. One of the items included in LD258 FAME budget supports the Maine AHEC program. I want to thank you for the continued support and tell you a little about work that we do and how FAME funds are used

The purpose of HRSA's AHEC Program is to develop and enhance education and training networks within communities, academic institutions, and community-based organizations. AHEC works with partners to increase diversity among health professionals, broaden the distribution of the health workforce, enhance health care quality, and improve health care delivery to rural and underserved areas and populations. In Maine, the AHEC program office resides at the University of New England. The three regional AHEC Centers include Northern Center at Northern Light; Western Center at Franklin Healthcare; and Eastern Center at Healthy Acadia. Maine AHEC is funded by federal government HRSA, FAME, Maine Health Access Foundation, and the University of New England. We do this by:

- providing rural, interprofessional, community-based clinical training experiences for health professions students;
- encouraging Maine youth and mid-career professionals to pursue health careers
- supporting practicing health professionals with continuing education and learning opportunities
- promoting population and public health approaches to addressing current and emerging health issues

The following offers examples of AHEC activities support by FAME in FY21-22:

- Coordinated a 3-day in person overnight health careers exploration camp in June 2022 with 30 Maine high school student participants. Participants included 23 students from the New Mainer community in Lewiston and Portland, as well as 7 students from rural communities in Maine.
- Continued a longitudinal health career pipeline program for high school students from refugee and immigrant families, working with 99 students in partnership with Maine Access Immigrant Network and New Mainers for Public Health Initiative.
- Offered a volunteer program for 65 students to gain hands on experience in health professions in the Bangor area.
- Delivered a Scrub Club day-camp for three days in Farmington Maine for 45 students.
- Supported six students from Maine tribes' participation in an Indigenous Public Health Professionals Panel hosted by Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness.
- Placed 42 health profession students in traditional clinical rotations across the state.
- Coordinated 31 Enhanced Clinical Rotations that included more in-depth community based and interprofessional experiences for students during their clinical rotations in rural and underserved communities.
- Created a webpage resource for clinical preceptors to include information and tools for precepting students.
- Enrolled 49 students into the Care for the Underserved Pathways (CUP) AHEC Scholars Program, exceeding the national requirement of 45 students. This program requires students to complete 160 hours of didactic and community based experiential learning to increase skill to work with rural and underserved areas. In a combined total of the four cohorts, 217 students were recruited, and 181 were retained with an 83% overall retention rate across the four years.
- Completed the first Maine AHEC Case Competition. Interprofessional groups of students presented public health based solutions for addressing the pressing health needs of the lobstering/fishing community.
- Presented 28 continuing education offerings to 4,241 health care providers and health profession students on topic such as COVID-19, overdose prevention and response, telehealth, and preventing burnout in health care.
- Program Office trained and deployed 59 students to assist at COVID-19 vaccine clinics.
- Leveraged the AHEC work to support multiple successful grant applications across the state with partners including MCD Global, Maine Primary Care Association, and UNE Physician Assistant Program.

With FAME funding, these and other Maine AHEC activities can be continued, expanded, and strengthened to support optimal health for all Mainers.

Sincerely,

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